

House Agriculture Committee SB 143

Chairman Kerns and Committee members: Wagner, V.C., Blyton, Clark, Evans, Fitzpatrick, Furey, Hale, Hoven, Howard, MacDonald, McClafferty, McNiven, Noonan, Pease-Lopez, Randall, Read, Salomon, Small, Smith, Williams.

My name is Allen Schallenberger from Sheridan, MT. I am a MT native, have been a wildlife management and research biologist and am a former cattle rancher and general outfitter in Montana. I did the first grizzly bear research in Montana outside national parks and still keep up on wildlife issues.

We need to pass SB 143 to guide MT FWP on grizzly bear policy. We have over 1,400 grizzlies in WY, MT and Idaho. Dr. Charles Schwartz USGS research chief for Yellowstone grizzly bear research said on Oct. 27, 2010, "The bucket is full." He was referring to grizzlies in the primary Yellowstone Conservation Area. He stated there were a conservative 603 grizzlies in the Yellowstone area. Dr. Rick Mace, MT FWP research chief for the Northern Continental Divide area said almost the same thing for that area. Grizzlies there have been found from Fort Benton to the Salish Mountains and many south of there to Highway 200 with at least 765 present. Two male grizzlies were killed at Elk Park North of Butte and on the Mount Haggin WMA south of Anaconda. DNA from both showed they originated from the northern Continental Divide area. An additional 40 grizzly bears are found in the Cabinet-Yaak area of Montana.

Wyoming and Idaho have limited the area Yellowstone grizzlies can use to the best public land habitat and where they will cause fewer conflicts. Montana on the other hand has said grizzly bears can go most everywhere in southern and western Montana. Page 39, of the 2006 Grizzly Bear Management Plan for Western Montana 2006-2016 states— "6. Preemptively relocate, aversively condition, deter, or remove bears when potential for conflict is high and other techniques are not applicable. It should be noted that preemptive moves would not be used to stop distribution increases, undermine recovery, or eliminate the need for people to take action to avoid conflicts." Please note that a milder term proactive is used in this bill. **I strongly emphasize, we do need to proactively manage grizzly bear conflicts and grizzly bear distribution in Montana.**

You have the opportunity to set policy because the 2002 southwestern MT plan which is in effect outside the primary Yellowstone recovery area will be rewritten by FWP and probably joined with the 2006 western MT. plan probably in 2012. Also a plan declaring the Northern Continental Divide area recovered may be in the works. To further complicate the matter, in 2009 at a meeting at a fancy and expensive resort in British Columbia, the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee approved a plan governing MT, ID and WY 2010-2014. Please realize this committee is made up of high ranking, unelected bureaucrats from several federal agencies with bureaucrat representatives from MT, ID, WY, WS and some Canadian provinces. Page 11 of that 14 page plan is particularly concerning. It has Yellowstone grizzlies walking north to Glacier, west to the Selway-Bitterroot, Glacier to YNP, Glacier to the Selway-Bitterroot, Glacier to the Cabinet Mountains, Cabinet Mountains to the Selway-Bitterroot. Never mind that both the Montana and Idaho legislatures have gone on record as wanting no grizzly bears in

the Selway-Bitterroot. It does not make sense to dump grizzly bears into Ravalli and Missoula counties which have a total of 140,000 people.

Grizzly bears are powerful and potentially very dangerous and destructive animals. Adult males in the Yellowstone area eat 80 per cent animal matter and 85 if livestock are present. Adult females eat about 40 per cent animal matter and 60 per cent plant materials. The adult bears and wolves kill many cattle, sheep, elk and moose in the WY, ID, and MT area. That contrasts with northwestern Montana where grizzly bears eat 95-97 per cent plant materials and only occasionally kill livestock or big game animals.

Some recent reports show the predatory efficiency of Yellowstone area grizzly bears. In the September 2010 issue of The Journal of Wildlife Management it was reported that a total of 29,693 cows plus calves grazed the Upper Green River USFS Allotment in Wyoming. Grizzlies started killing calves in 1995 and wolves started in 2000. During the 10 year period 1995-2004 grizzlies killed 520 domestic calves and wolves 177. In the Wind River in Wyoming grizzly and black bears killed 156 domestic sheep for one rancher in 1996 and 420 in 1997. In 1999 in the same drainage grizzly bears killed 114 calves and 37 cows all registered. The Wind River reports were in RANGE magazine in 1998 and 2001 respectively. In 2010 local area rancher friends in the southern Gravelly Mountains lost 80 head of cows and calves and most to suspected wolf and grizzly bear predation. Normal loss is 30 head. Fifty of the animal carcasses were never found by riders. The riders also reported finding lots of elk calf legs. Riders also had great difficulty with some aggressive bears among the at least seven grizzly bears present. Two archery hunters were mauled by sow grizzlies in the same area. On the upper Gallatin River in 2005 there were 1,500 elk. The either-sex hunting season was shut down that year and only a few bulls were taken after that. By 2009 the herd was down to less than 200 head due to predation by wolves and grizzly bears with some help from black bears, mountain lions and coyotes. The Northern Yellowstone elk herd has dropped drastically since 1995 and only 4,635 elk were found inside and outside the park this year. The large drop of over 1,400 elk since last year was largely due to predation by wolves and grizzly bears with some help from bull elk hunters. Moose in Yellowstone National Park numbered 1,200 in 1995. In 2009 they had dropped to 114 again mostly due to predation.

Grizzly bears in the Yellowstone area are very aggressive and 52 people have been mauled in Wyoming since 1992, 27 in southwest MT since 1991, and 4 in southeast Idaho from 2000-2009. In addition 87 grizzly bears have been killed in self defense in the Yellowstone area since 1998. One person was killed in MT and one in WY in 2010. For some reason the 15 grizzlies killed in 2010 included mistaken ID bears so the self defense number is probably slightly less. The aggressive history contrasts greatly with northern MT where there are more bears and fewer people have been mauled but three people were killed during the period two of which were in Glacier National Park. When grizzly bears maul people, about 50 per cent of the persons have extensive injuries and long hospitalizations. Injuries to the head are common as that is what bears try to bite. In contrast black bear damage usually consists of light bites and scratches although predatory behavior by black bears can cause severe injuries and death of people.

In 2004 the USFWS conducted a review and found that state and federal agencies were spending \$6,000.00 per grizzly bear per year in the lower 48 states. They are recovered and we need to move on to better management practices by the states. Grizzly bear research has been carried out in the Yellowstone area since 1959 and the Glacier area since 1967. A lot is known about these bears.

Montana FWP has said let the grizzly bears go everywhere from the Pryor Mountains to Sunburst and west to Idaho and they will manage them. We have seen how well that has worked with wolves. I recommend you pass this bill and provide some needed guidance for Montana grizzly bear management. Wyoming and Idaho have common sense management which limits grizzlies to the best habitat and areas where conflicts will be least. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.